

Message Text

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41

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 EURE-00 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIEP-01 CEA-01 /080 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4647

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION NATO

USEC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP

SUBJ: LABOR PROBLEMS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN BARCELONA

1. BARCELONA HAS BECOME THE SCENE OF VARIOUS STRIKES AND LABOR PROBLEMS. IN ADDITION TO CONTINUING BARCELONA CONSTRUCTION STRIKE WHICH HAS ACQUIRED FAIRLY SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS (AS MANY AS 35,000 BARCELONA CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ARE REPORTEDLY NOW ON STRIKE) RECENT DAYS HAVE WITNESSED LABOR UNREST, PROTESTS, AGITATION, AND WORK STOPPAGES IN SENSITIVE FIELD OF MUNICIPAL
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EMPLOYEES INCLUDING MUNICIPAL POLICE (WHO ARE PRIMARILY TRAFFIC

COPS) AND FIREMEN. THIS ACTIVITY REFLECTS SOME UNREST IN THESE SECTORS NATIONWIDE, LARGELY OVER PAY INCREASES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN WORKING CONDITIONS.

2. LAST SEVERAL DAYS HAVE WITNESSED VARIOUS DEMOS, SIT-INS. AND WORK STOPPAGES IN BARCELONA AMONG THESE SECTORS OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS RESULTING IN CLASHES WITH SECURITY FORCES. THESE INCIDENTS CULMINATED IN A FEB 17 SIT-IN AT BARCELONA TOWN HALL BY 2,500 PUBLIC EMPLOYEES WHO WERE LATER EVICTED BY NATIONAL ARMED POLICE. ON SAME DATE SEVERAL INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE IN SEVERAL BARCELONA STREETS AND PUBLIC SQUARES, WITH GROUPS OF MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING MUNICIPAL POLICE AND FIREMEN STAGING SMALL DEMONSTRATIONS. IN AT LEAST ONE INCIDENT, A PROTESTING POLICEMAN HARANGUING THE CROWD WAS INJURED WHEN NATIONAL POLICE INTERVENED.

3. ON FEB 18 GOVT DECREED MILITARIZATION OF 2,271 BARCELONA MUNICIPAL POLICEMEN AND 680 FIREMEN, THUS ENDING THIS STRIKE IN THE SAME MANNER AS THE RAILROAD WORKERS AND MADRID POSTMEN'S STRIKES ENDED A MONTH AGO.

4. OUR CONSULATE IN BARCELONA REPORTS THAT SITUATION CALMED DOWN SOMEWHAT ON FEB 18, ALTHOUGH THERE CONTINUED TO BE SOME MANIFESTATIONS OF GOVT EMPLOYEES, THIS TIME CAREFULLY EXCLUDING THE NOW-MILITARIZED POLICE AND FIREMEN. AT LEAST ONE WAS BROKEN UP BY POLICE, AS WERE SEVERAL DEMONSTRATIONS OF STRIKING CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, ONE OF WHICH WAS QUITE SIZEABLE.

5. THE BARCELONA CHALLENGE HAS REPLACED THE MADRID CHALLENGE IN THE STRIKE FIELD, WITH A NEW WRINKLE, PUBLIC EMPLOYEE STRIKES IN THE KEY SECTORS OF FIREMEN AND POLICE, ALTHOUGH IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD THAT MUNICIPAL POLICE DO NOT HAVE A PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT PUBLIC SECURITY ROLE, THIS BEING THE FUNCTION OF THE NATIONAL ARMED POLICE AND CIVIL GUARDS. WHILE ANY STRIKE ACTIVITY IN CATALONIA ASSUMES A MEASURE OF POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE, THE CAUSES CLEARLY APPEAR TO BE ECONOMIC. THE BARCELONA SITUATION IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE MANIFEST UNPOPULARITY OF THE MAYOR, A HOLDOVER MADRID APPOINTEE.

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WE FIND IT INTERESTING THAT THESE STRIKES SHOULD TAKE PLACE WHILE THE KING IS VISITING CATALAN COUNTRY.
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